

EXISTENTIALISM AND PSYCHIATRY*

By

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IN psychiatry we often use different kinds of psychology without being aware of doing so. Before we consider existentialist psychiatry in detail we must discuss the three different kinds of psychology, namely, explanatory psychology, understanding psychology and interpretive psychology.

In explanatory psychology, we investigate human and animal behaviour scientifically and endeavour to find rules and laws.

In understanding psychology, we feel ourselves into the situation of other people and understand how one psychological event follows another. For example, we see a man whose face and general demeanour indicate that he is angry. We feel ourselves into his situation and understand why he is angry. We all, of course, practise this simple understanding psychology.

On the basis of understanding psychology we can erect psychological theories and use these theories to interpret behaviour. Interpretive psychologies are mixtures of naïve understanding psychology and concepts drawn from philosophy, neurology, neuropsychiatry and even folklore. In the Western world Freudian psychology is the most popular interpretive psychology whereas in the Soviet Union neo-Pavlovian psychology plays the same role. Personally, in my day to day practice of psychiatry, I find Freudian psychology extremely useful. It helps me to understand and use in psychotherapy the material which my patients communicate to me.

Using Heidegger's philosophy, Binswanger has produced a new psychopathology which he calls Daseinanalysis. This, I believe, is really yet another variety of interpretive psychology. Other psychiatrists have, of course, used existentialist concepts. However, in the limited time at my disposal, I will only be able to give a brief account of Heidegger's views and of Binswanger's analysis of schizophrenia. This is, therefore, a discussion of only one aspect of existentialist psychiatry and not an extensive review.

Heidegger wishes to answer the question, "What is the Being of things which are?". Whereas traditional philosophy looks beyond the physical in its search for the essence of Being, Heidegger considers that the human existing being, the Dasein (the Being who is there) is the true source of being. This word "Dasein" comes from the two German words—da, meaning there, and sein, meaning to be or being, since the gerund in German has the form of the infinitive.

The Dasein (the existing human being) stands in the world and this "standing-in" can be understood as based on the human concern for things. There are three aspects of concern and each is a mode of "standing-in". These modes may be authentic or inauthentic. In the authentic mode the Dasein has full insight into what he is and relates himself to things with this in view. In the inauthentic mode the Dasein is lost in the necessities of everyday life and his relationships to things do not take into account his total possibilities.

* Lecture given to the Section of Psychiatry, Birmingham Medical Institute, on 11 October, 1960.

The three authentic modes are:

1. The discovery of self as already in the world (Befindlichkeit).
2. Understanding (Verstehen).
3. Discourse (Rede).

The corresponding three inauthentic modes are:

1. Ambiguity (Zweideutigkeit).
2. Curiosity (Neugier).
3. Prattle (Gerede).*

Just as past, present and future are inseparable modes of time, so each of the modes of "standing-in" cannot be separated from the other two.

Inauthentic existence is due to Dasein being wrapped up in his concern for everyday life. This everyday state of the Dasein is Verfallensein, the state of being fallen. In this stage, true understanding is impossible and ambiguity occurs. The lack of understanding leads to a concern for trivialities which is the mode of curiosity. Dasein expresses this curiosity in prattle, i.e., the results of an inauthentic existence are expressed in prattle.

The three authentic modes of "standing-in" are based on an ontological structure which can be regarded as the basic attitude of the Dasein. This is Sorge (Care). In order to be authentic the Dasein must understand the structure of his own existence. He must achieve a state of care in which he realizes that he alone is responsible for meaning in the world and in which he realizes his own nothingness as a finite being.

To achieve this, a special act of self-discovery, which throws the whole of Dasein's being-in-the-world into question, is necessary. The first step in self-discovery is Angst, a nameless dread which leads the Dasein to ask, "Who am I?" and "What am I doing here?" Angst arises from a psychological shock or from disgust produced by an utterly inauthentic existence, which leads to a realization of the Dasein's Unheimlichkeit (Un-home-li-ness) in the World. The Angst produced by this leads to self-questioning and the discovery of the whole structure of one's own existence.

In Sorge (Care) the Dasein discovers himself in three ways:

1. As being on the way, i.e., projecting himself into the future. This is Understanding (Verstehen).
2. As already being in the World. This is the discovery of self. (Befindlichkeit).
3. As being with things, i.e., living in a reciprocal relationship with the things that are. This is Discourse (Rede).

We now have to consider the temporality of Dasein. He lives in expectation of the future and the only sure thing in the future is death. When the Dasein comprehends absolutely his future death he realizes at the same time the whole of his future existence. Dasein is thus Being-towards-Death (Sein-zum-Tode) and when he realizes this he is free to engage himself and decide his attitude towards things.

The Dasein begins in a state of thrown-ness (Geworfenheit) and ends in

* It is interesting to note here the verbal tricks of this philosophy. Rede (Discourse) is the authentic mode and Gerede (Pattle) is the inauthentic mode. This verbal contrast is lost in translation.

death so that he is always haunted by his own Nothingness. The Dasein is the only creature who can accept the idea of his own Nothingness and is therefore able to accept or reject his own destiny. From out of Nothing the Dasein inserts a disengaging nothing which allows the things that are to be understood. In other words, Dasein opens a space within the horizon of time in which the light of Being can reveal itself.

Dasein must accept his guilt due to his previous inauthentic existence by means of resolution which is "an extraordinary mode of the open-ness of Dasein. . . ." This resolution produces an authentic existence and allows the Being-with-Others (Mitsein).

Heidegger does not concern himself very much with Mitsein (Being-with-Others), Sartre rejects Mitsein and deduces the existence of the Other from the Look. Binswanger has stressed this mode of Being and has modified Heidegger's views. He considers that Love is the ontological opposite of Care and that Being-with-Others (Mitsein) is the basis of Love. Love creates an Eternity and vanquishes space, time and history since the loved one exists as a Thou for the loving one and therefore exists after his death. This is merely a verbal trick. It is difficult to see how the Dasein can be eternal as an image in the mind of the Mitseinde (co-existent) who loves him. Surely the image disappears when the loving co-existent dies or even dement. Binswanger has in fact grossly distorted Heidegger's views by shifting the focal point of the philosophy from the predicament of the isolated individual to the difficulties of the social individual.

Time for Heidegger is dependent on the Dasein who projects himself into the future by authentic resolution. Since he anticipates his potentialities, his future is partly a now. This is different from the everyday view of the future which regards it as a state of possession of things, which has not yet arrived. The Dasein can possess his past now when he realizes he has been thrown into the world and is Being-towards-death. Dasein must assume responsibility for what he was and is. The present for the authentic Dasein is the full Moment (Augenblick) when he makes the past present by a future which he possesses as a resolute act of projection into the future. This concept of the full Moment or Augenblick comes from Kierkegaard who was a manic-depressive. One wonders if this was not originally based on Kierkegaard's experiences in mania. However, the morbid origin of a concept does not mean that it is untrue.

The modes of "standing-in" take place in authentic or inauthentic temporality. Understanding depends on projecting resolution into the future. If this is not done, then the future is merely a now which is not yet. Self-discovery is determined by the past which is acknowledged and its possibilities are used for future projections. The Dasein who exists in authentic temporality lives in the Moment (Augenblick) in which there is a new light on the things which are. This new Being is realized in the form of a discursive unveiling of the new reality. This Discourse (Rede) is expressed in speech. Words play an important role in Heidegger's philosophy. He and his followers attempt to understand concepts by analysing words. As German is a synthetic language, this artificial philological analysis is easy to carry out. Apart from this analysis of words, they invent new words or use established words in an unusual way.

It is now necessary to consider how this philosophy has arisen and how it stands in relation to other philosophies. There are two basic positions in philosophy, realism and idealism. The realist or materialist believes that mind is a product of matter and the sensations are produced by matter. The idealist regards mind as primary and matter as secondary, so that sensations are not entirely produced by a material world which is independent of mind. An extreme

variety of idealism is solipsism in which the individual is only sure of his own existence and considers his sensations to be present in his imagination.

Kant produced an interesting variety of idealism which has had a profound effect on modern European thought but especially on German philosophy and psychology. He suggested that we perceive things as phenomena but we do not perceive things as they really are, namely things-in-themselves. To know a thing as it really is we must make a transcendental leap from the thing for us to the thing in itself. Thus human experience consists of the elaboration of perception so that the mind orders the perception of objects in time and space.

From this it follows that there are two types of psychology, one which deals with mental phenomena and the other which deals with the transcendental mind. The mind in this latter sense cannot be investigated but only analysed by means of the *a priori* concepts which are present in the mind. If one follows this kind of philosophy one is entitled to erect one's own concepts about the mind and organize them into a system without any need to appeal to empirical facts.

This is what Heidegger does when he tries to derive the way in which the human being exists from pure contemplation of the problems of the existent in terms of philosophical ideas. He imposes an order on things, which is designed to lead to the discovery of the things-in-themselves. He reaches the conclusion that by means of self discovery one is able to detach oneself from the everyday aspect of things, i.e., from the Kantian phenomena. This detachment creates a distance from things which allows of their proper appreciation. This self detachment is expressed as "the inserting of a nothing". Thus the understanding of things in themselves is achieved. The weakness of this whole system is the lack of an adequate method of testing the results. How do we know that we really have discovered our true selves or that our projections into the future are consistent with our potentialities and the situation? Despite Heidegger's protests one cannot help feeling that his philosophy is really a variety of solipsism.

The most striking feature of this philosophy is its morbid subjectivism. Dasein is not "born of woman" but is thrown into the world. He is not trying to live honestly in harmony with his fellows but is living towards death. This is the type of thinking which one finds in the shut-in shy adolescent who finds it difficult to make interpersonal relationships. In his utter isolation he asks himself "Who am I?" and "Where am I going?" and often receives an answer like that of Omar Khayyam.

"A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste.
And Lo! the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The Nothing it set out from—oh, make haste!"

It is therefore not surprising that ideas resembling existentialist thinking are to be found in disturbed adolescents and young intelligent schizophrenics.

So much for a psychiatric criticism of the philosophy; now we must consider its application to the problem of schizophrenia. Binswanger has published detailed existential studies of five schizophrenic patients during the years 1944 to 1953. In 1957 he republished these studies in book form under the title of *Schizophrenie* and in his introduction to this book he summarized his findings.

In his investigations he was looking for a daseinanalytic order and structural order of the schizophrenic Dasein. He tried to grasp the special structures of the disposition of Being. Instead of disease entities he claims to have discovered a homogeneity of definite structure and developments of the Dasein.

He claims that the basic concept in the understanding of the schizophrenic development of the Dasein is Inconsequence of or the breaking apart of natural experience which normally proceeds as a natural sequence of connections. Heidegger expresses this as our Abode (Aufenthalt) with things and considers that it consists in our allowing the things that are to be as they are. Binswanger's patients wanted to dictate to things and force them to be what they wanted them to be. Since practical experience could not unfold freely, gaps appeared. In most cases this Inconsequence could be found in the behaviour in childhood.

This Inconsequence of practical experience leads the patient to find ways out which will restore the lost order and fill in the gaps. No satisfactory way out can be found and Dasein finally develops a desire for finality, i.e., for an end. The last way out is found in a high flown or *verstiegene* ideal which gives the patient a base from which he can continue the struggle. However, the high flown ideal is inadequate for the life situation.

The inconsequence of experience is split into an alternative; a rigid Either-Or. A new order seems to have emerged in the form of the high flown ideal but high flown-ness offers no way out. In fact the high flown ideal is merely one side of the alternative. The opposite side cannot be completely suppressed but an attempt is made to cover it up. The existential alternative is expressed in some field of activity such as the body or social life. Thus in one patient it was thinness and fatness of the body while in another it was the choice of being socially superior or inferior.

This insoluble alternative leads to the Dasein being in a harassed state. It culminates in a renunciation of the antinomic problem and a withdrawal of the Dasein from the accomplishment of his existence. In the case of Ellen West there was a free decision to withdraw from life by ending it. In the case of Jürg Zünd, there was a withdrawal from social life and the patient chose life in a mental hospital. In other cases there was a withdrawal from the Dasein into the completely involuntary mode of delusion. In this mode the Dasein does not voluntarily renounce actual living or social life but renounces life as an independent self and surrenders itself to foreign powers.

In the case of Ilse, she burnt her hand in order to demonstrate her martyrdom to her coexistents. After this she developed the delusion that she was being put on show. Thus the active behaviour of making a show of herself changed into passive suffering of being put on show. In the mode of martyrdom there was a split in the sequential connection of practical experience but not a complete destruction. The martyrdom did not permit of any development of coherent practical experiences which then broke apart giving rise to an empty place. This was filled by a completely inconsequential mode of experience, namely that of being a sacrifice to others, which had some inner connection with earlier experiences. The Dasein became stuck fast in a model of practical experience which modelled all new experiences according to its own model.

Thus the act of sacrifice in this case forms a connecting link between normality and delusional psychosis. In another case the connecting link was an almost delusional superstitious oracle which consisted of the patient extracting meanings from the world by means of a play on words. The resignation of the Dasein here took the form of the renouncing of her own decisions in favour of those of her enemies.

Thus delusion is one of the forms of resignation of the Dasein in relation to its antinomic tension produced by inconsequence of practical experience. Withdrawal from actual living or from social life are other forms of resignation. In delusion there is a resignation in the form of a withdrawal from the cohesion

of one's own decisions and a complete self surrender to the power of others. The indications which the delusional patient detects around him are the secondary or tertiary results of the resignation of the Dasein in the form of taking oneself out of one's own cohesion of decisions. The content of the delusion depends on the way in which the Dasein fills out the gaps created by his withdrawal from the antinomic problem of practical experience. He draws on his fantasies for material to fill these gaps.

In 1957 Binswanger published a book on *Three Forms of Failed Existence* — *Verstiegenheit, Verschrobenheit, Manieriertheit*. Kahn has translated these terms as eccentricity, queerness and stiltedness, but I feel that either they must be left in the German as technical terms or translated into English neologisms. *Verstiegen* comes from the verb *versteigen* which means to climb the wrong way or to go astray on the mountain. This has led to the figurative use of *verstiegen* to mean high flown or eccentric. *Verstiegenheit* is thus high flown-ness. *Verschroben* comes from the verb *verschrauben* which means to screw up or screw the wrong way. *Verschrobenheit* is usually translated as queerness, eccentricity or crankiness but could be translated as screwiness. *Manieriertheit* is usually translated as mannerism in the ordinary nontechnical sense of the word but in order to avoid confusion with the symptoms of mannerism I suggest it be translated as *manneredness*.

Binswanger considers that High flown-ness, Screwiness and Manneredness are modes of failure of the Dasein in the sense of the historical movement of the Dasein having come to an end, or being stuck fast. Consequently, Dasein is not able to be with others in love and friendship. These modes are very close to the modes of schizophrenic Dasein such as "stiffness" and being "being-at-stand-still". *Verstiegenheit* (high flown-ness) is an anthropological disproportion. The normal Dasein moves in a horizontal and a vertical plane and his movements in these planes are correlated but in *Verstiegenheit* the Dasein has climbed too high or become stuck in the vertical dimension. In *Verschrobenheit* (screwiness) the Dasein is transverse or oblique to the situation and his fellow existents because he justifies his behaviour not by relating it to the situation and his co-existents but by a dominating idea which arises from his fallen state. In *Manieriertheit* (manneredness) the Dasein carries on a discussion with himself instead of with others. His existence is split. Binswanger believes that *Verstiegenheit, Verschrobenheit* and *Manieriertheit* are existentially related to schizophrenic inflexibility, stiffness and splitting.

Stiffness means that the movement of the Dasein into the future is cut off. The *verstiegene* (highflown) ideal and the *Verschrobenheit* are initial stages of schizophrenic stiffness. Thus in *Verschrobenheit* (screwiness) the obliqueness of the patient's world makes authentic self foundation incomplete. In *Manieriertheit* (manneredness) there is an incessant repeating of the reflexion of one's own Dasein in the mirror of the pattern or model of Man. The mimicry and gesture of the individual become a mask and it is as if there were an iron net around all expressive movements. The free play of Dasein's movement is lost.

Binswanger summarizes the relationship of the three unsuccessful forms of existence to schizophrenia as follows:

"The proximity of schizophrenia to the forms of Dasein of *Verstiegenheit, Verschrobenheit* and *Manieriertheit* and the passing over of these forms into schizophrenia from time to time depends therefore on the fact that these forms represent intermediate existential forms between the authentic historical movement of the Dasein and the complete arrest of this movement. These are the forms therefore which somehow make it possible for Dasein to hold his own in

the world for a variable length of time although he is not in the homeland of love. This does not occur in the sense of the success of Dasein with the development of his freedom, his abundant possibilities and his creative powers but in the sense of remaining on the edge of the abyss which we call the "emptiness" or "stiffness of psychic life", "schizophrenic thoughtlessness, breakdown or deterioration".

After all this, have we learned anything new about schizophrenia? Such ideas as a break in the coherence and sequence of experience are not new and do not seem any more profound when expressed in Heideggerian jargon and neologisms. *Verstiegenheit*, *Verschrobenheit* and *Manieriertheit* are merely long-winded ways of saying that a given person is odd. We know some people who are odd develop schizophrenia and some do not. It is difficult to see what is to be gained by calling oddness "an intermediate form of existence between the authentic historical movement of the Dasein and the complete arrest of this movement".

Perhaps Binswanger's criticism of a patient who wrote books can be applied to Binswanger himself. He writes as follows about this patient whom he cites as an example of *Verschrobenheit*.

"Apart from the inconsequent consequence of the mode of communication in the sense of the Dasein as *verschroben*, yet another essential characteristic which is connected with *Verschrobenheit* is especially clear in this case. This is the type and manner in which the Dasein here handles a precise totality of circumstances. The deficient consideration for the coexistents, even the denial of the basis of communication in general, brings it about that the totality of circumstances which is in question—i.e., the whole of the historical doctrines and methods of the time—are not preserved in their richness but are restricted or reduced to a purely formal scheme of thought".

This is precisely what Binswanger himself has done. He has reduced the richness of schizophrenic symptomatology to a simple scheme. The philosophers' stone of schizophrenia, the basic psychological disorder from which all symptoms are derived, is presented to us in a new disguise. Nothing new is said which can help us to understand or explain schizophrenia.

This criticism of Binswanger applies equally to Heidegger. He has denied the basis of communication and grossly misused the German language. This is well expressed by the Russian existentialist theologian, R. Berdyaev, who writes:

"Heidegger has, ironically enough, rationalized the Kierkegaardian theme into a rigid and almost scholastic system. He puts a genuinely existential experience into the strait jacket of rational categories, which are really quite unfit for it and, in so doing, conjures up a whole inventory of almost unbearable and incomprehensible terminology, the only virtue of which is its undoubted originality."

When one examines Heidegger's philosophy rationally, it becomes obvious that it is an attempt to convey some type of mystical experience. It is in fact a religion without a god. It is no more justifiable to apply Heidegger's ideas to clinical psychiatry than it is to apply the ideas of Roman Catholicism, Buddhism or Islam. This view gains some support from Karl Jaspers who has approached the matter from a different angle. He calls existentialist psychiatry "a philosophical error".

In some ways Daseinanalysis and allied schools of psychiatry are a natural development of German psychiatry. Griesinger's slogan, "Mental disorders are brain disorders" was the inspiration of the careful investigation of psychiatric

symptomatology carried out by the German psychiatrists of the late nineteenth century and the opening of this century. Kraepelin went farther than most of his colleagues and used experimental psychological techniques in his investigations. He was, of course, a pupil of Wundt, the founder of experimental psychology. However, although this psychology has flourished in Britain and America, it has been overshadowed in Germany by the most speculative varieties of psychology, which are more philosophical than scientific. This, I believe, has led to the arrest in the progress of German psychiatry. Thus the only recent developments have been the application of speculative psychology to clinical problems.

The careful description of psychiatric symptoms and the delimitation of psychiatric syndromes was completed many years ago by the classical German psychiatrists. The syndromes and symptoms were then interpreted in terms of theories which were usually borrowed from speculative psychology. The different schools used different psychological theories. A large number of polemical articles were written but no one ever thought of deciding the issues by experimental investigation.

Today the tendency is to turn away from the old sterile disputes and to accept some variety of interpretive (or dynamic) psychology. Thus neo-Freudian and existentialist views have become popular in Germany and the classical clinical psychiatry is now being neglected. The baby is being emptied out with the bath. I believe that the findings of German classical psychiatry are of great value since we can use them to delimit the conditions which we are investigating. On the other hand, the philosophical psychological constructs are usually hardly worth translating into English and in fact many are untranslatable since they are more connected with the nature of the German language than with reality. This particularly applies to Daseinanalysis.

To sum up, I am certain that there is nothing of additional value in existentialist psychiatry. Formulation of our patients' problems in a new jargon is an interesting scholastic exercise but the time spent in this way would be more profitably spent in experimental investigation.

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